

THE

שקל

# SHEKEL



VOLUME XLV NO. 6 NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2012

## Hadassah at 100



HENRIETTE SZOLD



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- *Treasures of Jewish Medieval fortress*
- *Interview with Israeli coin designer*
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## GENERAL CONTACT

Donna Sims, P.O. Box 20255, Fountain Hills, AZ 85269  
E-mail: [dancinazdonna@gmail.com](mailto:dancinazdonna@gmail.com)

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# THE SHEKEL

VOLUME XLV NO. 6 (NO 246)

NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2012

ANDREW PERALA, EDITOR

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First, I want to sincerely thank all of the AINA members who offered us the copies we need to complete the collection of *The Shekel* magazines that will ultimately be available on our web site [www.theshekel.org](http://www.theshekel.org). We still need just two issues. Please look in your library, garage, etc. to see if you have Volume 3 (1970) number 2 and 4.

If you wish, we can return your Shekel to you after it has been scanned. Please call me at (818) 225-1348 and if it is still needed I will tell you where to mail. Hopefully sometime in 2013, all of *The Shekels*—forming an Encyclopedia of Judaic Numismatics—will be available for collectors, researchers, etc.

Next, since this is our Chanukah issue, I want to thank Canadian AINA member Serge Huard for sending me a copy of a handsome Chanukah medal that he had made up in 1988—shown at right, above.

Note that the holiday is spelled “Hanukkah” on this medal, one of several spelling variations that are used, including U.S. postage stamps.

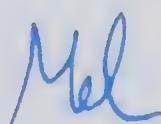
I am also pleased to show a picture of the 2013 medal that will be sent to all AINA members who have already renewed or will renew for next year. It pictures the extremely rare and historic prototype Year One Ju-

daean Shekel, the first strictly Jewish silver coin - issued in 66/67 CE - that sold for over a million dollars in Heritage Auction's Shoshana Sale earlier this year.

The AINA logo was designed by Nat Sobel, and the Million Dollar Shekel side was designed by Mel Wacks. When's the last time you got a “million-dollar coin” for free?

In behalf of the AINA Officers, Board of Directors and Editor I want to wish you a very happy holiday season, and we look forward to another year of collecting, learning and fun.

With warm regards,



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# AUCTION RESULTS:

# PALESTINE MANDATE COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION SOLD BY GOLDBERG AUCTIONEERS

BY MEL WACKS

The “Jerusalem Collection” of Palestine Mandate coins was sold by Goldberg Auctioneers on Sept. 5, 2012 in Beverly Hills.

Almost all were premium quality Uncirculated coins, certified by the Professional Coin Grading Service. This series is popular with Jewish, Israeli and Arab collectors—and a number of coins sold for more than \$500 each.

Most of the coins sold were ranked in the top tiers of Uncirculated specimens graded by PCGS. The highest prices realized at the auction were in excess of \$1,200 for the coins in greatest demand.

Star performers for several denominations are pictured. The “mil” denomination was chosen by a committee of Arabs and Jews and was announced on Feb. 27, 1927. The Palestine pound was set at the equivalent of the British gold sovereign, and consisted of 1000 mils.

In her seminal work *Israel's Modern Money and Medals 1917-1970* Sylvia Haffner wrote “Taking into consideration that the [Palestine Mandate] coinage has been obsolete since 1948 and that the greatest portion of the coins has been melted, collecting this series in choice condition is quite a challenge.” ☐



Images courtesy Goldberg Coins & Collectibles  
This 1933 100 mils coin, graded Mint  
State 64 by the Professional Coin Grading  
Service, realized \$1,475 (including buyer's  
fee) in a Sept. 5, 2012, auction conducted  
by Ira & Larry Goldberg Auctioneers.

Continued on Page 6

# MORE MANDATE AUCTION RESULTS



Images courtesy Goldberg Coins & Collectibles

A 1934 50 mils coin, graded Mint State 64 by the Professional Coin Grading Service, realized \$834 (including buyer's fee) in a Sept. 5, 2012, auction conducted by Ira & Larry Goldberg Auctioneers in Long Beach, CA.



Images courtesy Goldberg Coins & Collectibles

A 1940 1 mil coin, graded Mint State 65, with none finer in Mint State Red and Brown by PCGS, realized \$1,093 (including buyer's fee) in the Sept. 5, 2012, auction.



Images courtesy Goldberg Coins & Collectibles

A 1935 10 mils coin, graded Mint State 66, with none finer graded by PCGS, realized \$805 (including buyer's fee) in the Sept. 5, 2012, auction.

# RANGE, GRADE OF AUCTION PRICES REALIZED SEPT. 5, 2012

Year	Denom	PCGS Grade/Range of Auction Prices Realized				
PCGS Grade		AU-55	MS-62-63	MS-64	MS-65	MS-66
1927	100 mils			320-340	500	525
	50 mils					
	20 mils					
	10 mils					
	5 mils					
	2 mils					
	1 mil					
1931	100 mils	1400				
	50 mils	420				
1933	100 mils	180	925	1475		
	50 mils			270-280		
	20 mils	200 (AU-58)			420-550	
	10 mils					
1934	100 mils	270 (AU-50)	750	725		
	50 mils		300 (MS-62)			
	20 mils	270				
	10 mils			575		
	5 mils			400		
1935	100 mils	55 (AU-58)		150-160	575	
	50 mils			50		
	20 mils				350	700
	10 mils			99-200		
	5 mils			80-150		
	1 mil			35-60		
1937	10 mils			250-320		
	1 mil			130-360	500	
1939	100 mils			400		
	50 mils			65	280	
	10 mils			370		
	5 mils			75		
	1 mil			50-55	150-160	
1940	100 mils		110-140			
	50 mils		140			
	20 mils		775-975			
	10 mils				320	675
	1 mil		120			950
1941	20 mils	260 AU-(50)	1850 (MS-62)			
	10 mils		250			
	5 mils				575	
	2 mils				110-130	
	1 mil				20-40	
1942	100 mils	55 (58)	90 (MS-62)	220-250		
	50 mils			160		
	20 mils			350-550		
	10 mils			230-260		
	5 mils			55	140-175	
	2 mils			35-80	270	
	1 mil					
1943	10 mils			480		
	1 mil			55	100	
1944	20 mils	170 (AU-58)	20	1650		
	5 mils			70-110		
1945	1 mil				140	
	2 mils			85-130	130-350	
1946	10 mils		90	120-160		
	5 mils			50-55		
	2 mils			80-150		
	1 mil			35-80	150	
			20-25			

# Daniel in the Lion's Den



Images courtesy Israel Coins & Medals Corp  
The 2012 silver Proof version of Israel's  
"Daniel in the Lions' Den" coin is the 17th  
in the Biblical Art series and the two gold  
and two silver coins share the same reverse  
design, top, by Aharon Shevo.

sand people (*Daniel, Chapter 5*).

After having drunk much wine,  
he requested that the vessels of  
the Temple in Jerusalem taken  
by his father, be brought out and  
used.

At that very moment, a hidden

*Continued*

**T**he biblical story of Daniel is one of the best-known among all ages. Daniel's is an amazing story of faith, loyalty and heroism.

Daniel was a handsome, intelligent boy of royal descent, who was exiled from his home in the Land of Israel, his country of birth, before the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE. He grew up in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, became a favorite of the King and later, the interpreter of the King's dreams.

For this, he was appointed head of the King's wise men and the Kingdom of Babylon.

When Nebuchadnezzar died, his son Belshazar inherited the throne. One night, Belshazar made a great banquet for a thou-



*Image courtesy the National Gallery of Art*

*Peter Paul Rubens' classic painting "Daniel in the Lions' Den" focuses on the faith of Daniel to keep him safe as well as on the images of the Moroccan lions' faces and postures. This large painting, approximately 88 inches high by 130 inches wide, is in the Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art - a 1965 gift of the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.*

*Continued*

hand began to write words on the wall. Nobody was able to interpret the meaning of the words except Daniel.

Only Daniel was able to read and explain the significance of the writing on the wall: The words "***Mene Mene Teqel Ufarsin***" predicted the fall of the Babylonian Empire and its subsequent conquest by Persia and Modai.

That very night, Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede succeeded to the throne. Darius, like his predecessors, appointed Daniel as Head of his Coun-

selors and in sole charge of the empire.

At this time, out of sheer envy, Daniel's rivals sought his downfall. A decree was initiated by the King's Counselors with the King's agreement, forbidding orders to be given by any person except the King, for thirty days.

Any person not obeying this decree would be thrown into the lions' den. When Daniel remained faithful to God and continued praying to Him three times daily, his rivals spoke slander of him before the King.

Despite his affection for Dan-

*Continued*

# ELEGANT DESIGN GRACES DANIEL



Images courtesy ICMC  
The gold Proof "Daniel in the Lions' Den" is struck in both 10 NIS and 1 NIS denominations.

Continued

iel, the King now had no choice but to have him thrown into the lions' den.

That night, the King could not sleep and at the crack of dawn, he went to the lions' den to see what had become of Daniel.

To the relief and joy of the King, Daniel, rewarded by God for his faith and loyalty, was there in the den, untouched by the fierce lions. The King admired the God of Daniel and decreed that He was to be revered.

The King ordered that Daniel's rivals be thrown into the den, upon which they were instantly devoured by the lions.

Daniel continued to serve as executive officer to Darius the Mede and later, Cyrus, King of Persia, and his story continues to inspire people around the world and of many faiths today. ☩



*Qui regnabit in seculum seculorum*  
A 15th-century illustration of Daniel in the Lions' Den portrays Habakkuk being transported to the den to bring stew to Daniel, according to the Christian apocrypha "Additions to Daniel." In the Hebrew bible, Habakkuk is a minor prophet and author of the Book of Habakkuk.

# A 'DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN' DESIGN YOU CAN REALLY GET YOUR TEETH INTO



*One of the most amazing examples of “edible art” has to be this cookie depicting Daniel in the Lions’ Den, and baked by the Springerle Bakery in Strasburg, PA. The bakery makes a wide variety of edible art cookies.*

---

**2012 “Daniel in the Lions’ Den” coin specifications:** Au 10, 1 NIS; Ag NIS 2, NIS 1; the 17th coin design in the *Biblical Art Series* of the Israel Coins and Medals Corporation

**Obverse:** Face value, “Israel” in English, Hebrew and Arabic, mint year, Israel State Emblem and a hungry, roaring lion.

**Reverse:** Daniel in the lions’ den, praying to the Lord, flanked but unharmed by two fierce lions.

**Designer:** Aharon Shevo

## SPECIFICATIONS:

**Metal; Denomination; Mint Mark; Diameter; Weight; Max Mintage:**  
Gold/.917 22k, Proof; NIS 10; נ (Mem); 30mm; 16.96g; 555  
Gold/.999 24k, Proof; NIS 1; נ (Mem); 13.92mm; 1.244g; 5,000  
Silver/.925 Proof; NIS 2; נ (Mem); 38.7mm; 28.8g; 2,800  
Silver/925 Proof-like; NIS 1; Star of David; 30mm; 14.4g; 1,800

**For more information,** contact the Israel Coins and Medals Corporation: Israel Coins & Medals Corporation; 50 Bar Yehuda Drive, Nesher, Israel 36660; Tel: +972-4-8212805/6; E-mail: [medalot@coins.co.il](mailto:medalot@coins.co.il) or visit the ICMC website: <http://www.israelmint.com/en>.

# Time Capsule



*Treasures found in 900-year-old prayer house built next to Europe's oldest synagogue*

BY MARVIN TAMEANKO

In 1998 archaeologists, digging in the medieval Jewish quarter of the city of Erfurt, Germany, discovered a large treasure hidden in the cellar of a house located near the old synagogue.

This prayer house had been built in around 1100 and is the oldest synagogue still standing in Europe. It was designed as a stronghold to resist the frequent attacks by the local mobs during anti-Jewish riots, and it survived the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nazi destruction of synagogues only because it had been converted into a social hall sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The treasure was contained in two silver bowls and consisted of 3,142 silver coins, 14 round, cast silver ingots, 600 pieces of jewelry, eight nested silver drinking vessels, a spice

box, several silver belt buckles, seven jewel encrusted brooches, and a numerous quantity of silver sequins, small ornaments that were sewn as decorations onto garments.

All together these items would have had a substantial value in medieval times, well worth the title of "a fortune." Among the pieces of jewelry in the hoard was a small silver cosmetic set consisting of a round perfume bottle with ear and nail cleaning tools attached with a chain. The scent in the bottle could still be faintly discerned when the stopper was first removed.

The most remarkable jewelry item in the hoard was a Jewish gold wedding ring made in the form of a medieval building with towers. But a

*Continued*

# 'TERRIBLE' STORY BEHIND FIND



*Images courtesy Thuringia Archaeological Museum*

*Above: More than 3,000 coins, a dozen silver ingots, jewel-encrusted brooches and a remarkable Jewish gold wedding ring, right. Opposite page: The fortress-like old synagogue of Erfurt, Germany, built circa 1100 CE.*

*Continued*

terrible story lies behind the concealment of this fabulous treasure.

Erfurt, now the capital city of the state of Thuringia, is located on the banks of the Gera river in eastern Germany. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the treasure was hidden, it was a prosperous, international center of trade and commerce serving most of northern Europe.

Jews from western Europe, fleeing the massacres of the First Crusade, had first settled in the area around Erfurt during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and were offered protection by the king then later by the Archbishop of Mainz. After a century of peace, anti-Jewish riots broke out in Erfurt in 1221 and several Jewish families were murdered.

Nevertheless, the Jewish community in Erfurt survived this disaster and continued to function. It would eventually produce several prominent

rabbis, some of whom became martyrs in the persecutions that broke out in the area. Despite this instability, Erfurt became the scholarly and historical center for the Ashkenazi Jews who, escaping later persecutions, migrated into Poland and Russia and later throughout the Diaspora including America.

At the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the city council replaced the Bishop of Mainz and became responsible for the welfare of the Jews but was unable to protect them from the anger of the itinerant religious rabble rousers, such as the Flagellants, who came to the city and incited violence against the Jews.

These fanatics accused the Jews of being responsible for the Black Death, the plague that ravaged the country at that time. This epidemic originated in the East and was brought to Europe in 1347 by the

*Continued*

# BLACK PLAGUE BLAMED ON JEWS

*Blame for a host of society's illnesses were piled on the Jews of Erfurt, including "Black Death" - bubonic plague pandemics. Painting depicts medieval Jews burned during the Black Death. From the 1493 work *Liber Chronicum* by Hartmann Schedel.*



*Continued*

fleas on the rats in the merchant ships from Constantinople. Tragically, many Jewish communities were rounded up and burnt alive in pits as scapegoats for the outbreak of this plague which eventually killed one-third of the German population, including Jews.

In 1349, the citizens of Erfurt turned on the Jews and murdered between 100 and 300 of them. The surviving Jews were driven from the city and settled in more hospitable areas nearby. The prominent Talmudist, Alexander Suslin, was believed to be among the martyrs of Erfurt at that time.

The Jewish homes and businesses of Erfurt were pillaged and even their books were stolen. The synagogue's rare copy of the 'Tosefta' (the collection of comments on the Talmud), was confiscated and only recovered

in 1879 from the Erfurt Evangelical Church Library. In this violence many terrified Jews concealed their fortunes in their houses but did not survive to recover them.

Sadly, this is the typical, and too frequent, background story for the demise of many Jewish communities in medieval Europe and explains why the Erfurt treasure was suddenly hidden away by its owner.

Ten years later, in 1357, the city council of Erfurt allowed the Jews to return and reestablish their community. Over the years the Jews had specialized in money lending and banking and played an important part in the economic prosperity of the region.

But the anti-Semitism never subsided and special taxes, the arbitrary cancellation of debts to Christians, discrimination and confiscation of

*Continued*

# TREASURE IS INSIGHT INTO PAST

*A silver Gros Tournois of Louis IX (1266 to 1270) similar to those in the Erfurt Treasure.*



*Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group, CNG*

*Continued*

Jewish property continued for the following century. In 1458, the Erfurt Jews were again expelled by a hostile population, government and Church.

Many years later, in 1820, the Prussian authorities established a firmer rule in the city and allowed the Jews to return to Erfurt but restricted their lives, religious practices and activities.

Despite this, the Jews thrived in Erfurt and built a beautiful Moorish style synagogue that became famous in the region. This replaced the older fortress-like synagogue which was converted into a secular social hall at that time.

In 1938, the Nazis burned down the new synagogue and brutally forced the Jews to pay for the gasoline used to set the fire and for the cost of clearing away the ruins. During World War II many of the Erfurt Jews were deported to Buchenwald and Theresienstadt concentration camps where most died.

After the war a few surviving Jews

returned to Erfurt and rebuilt the community which numbered 120 in 1961 and has grown since then with the arrival of many East European and Russian Jewish immigrants, and even a few from Israel.

Archaeologists concluded that the Erfurt Treasure was the fortune and stock-in-trade of a wealthy banker or money lender, and the numerous coins in the Erfurt hoard provided scholars with much information about banking procedures and the currency used in international commerce in medieval Germany.

The 3,142 silver coins made up a large part of the hoard and illustrated the types and denominations of coins used in the commerce of medieval Europe.

Most of the coins are French types, some in excellent condition, struck for Louis IX (Saint Louis), 1266-1270, and for Philip VI (the Fair), 1285-1314. These coins are called 'Gros Tournois,' that is 'Large (Coins) of Tours,' after the 'Denier

*Continued*

# MOST COINS MEDIEVAL FRENCH



*Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group, CNG*

*A silver Gros Tournois of Philip IV (1285 to 1315) similar to those found in the Erfurt hoard, which contained in total more than 3,000 coins.*

*Continued*

Tournois,' denarii sized silver denominations named for the city of Tours where they were first issued. These coins all showed a symbolic medieval building with a central tower on the reverse, and a cross on the obverse.

The second largest number of coin types found in the Erfurt hoard are the Gros Tournios of Philip IV. These are similar in design to Louis IX's coinage and both of these coins probably served as the universal, acceptable trade currency in northern Germany at that time. Made of a good silver alloy, they also would have been used throughout Europe alongside the English penny and the silver Spanish trade coins.

The Erfurt treasure also contained a sprinkling of coins from several other European countries, indicating the wide extent of international banking and commerce that originated in

Erfurt. Typical of these minor types of coins were the silver denarii struck in Holland for Floris V, 1256-1296. These showed the head of the ruler on the obverse and the ubiquitous cross on the reverse.

Proving that the Erfurt Treasure was a banker's hoard, it also contained 14 roughly cast, round silver ingots, the size of small dinner plates, some stamped with an official seal. These were probably bullion pieces used for large transaction in the banking system, such as real estate purchases or loans to the nobility.

Without question, the key item in the Erfurt treasure was the spectacular gold wedding ring. Few of these medieval Jewish artifacts survived the ages and the Erfurt example is an extremely fine specimen. It is shaped like a Gothic religious building with a central dome and, by coincidence, the

*Continued*

# SPECTACULAR WEDDING RING

*Continued*

building on the ring closely resembles the tower on the Gros Tournois coins found in the hoard. The panels of the roof of the building on the ring are engraved with six Hebrew letters that spell out 'Mazel Tov,' Good Luck.

The bottom of the band of the ring is made as an open, sliding shank, which could be adjusted to fit different finger sizes. From this, we may conclude that it was an expensive, ceremonial ring rented out by its owner to people to be use only once for the wedding, and then returned to the banker.

Furthermore, the two bowls that contained the treasure are thought to be vessels used in some religious ritual. The bottoms of these bowls were decorated in enamel with scenes from the Aesop's fables of the Fox and the Raven and the Fox and the Eagle.

Some experts believe that these bowls, with the spice box and nested wine cups, may have been used in the local wedding rituals and, along with the ring, may have been loaned out as a set for the wedding ceremony and dinner.

After the treasure had been cleaned and fully documented, the archaeologists faced a scholarly dilemma. They had a problem about accurately categorizing and describing the discovery. Was it a rare snapshot into the life and culture of medieval Germany during the Black Death? Was it the capital



*Image courtesy Thuringia Archaeological Museum*

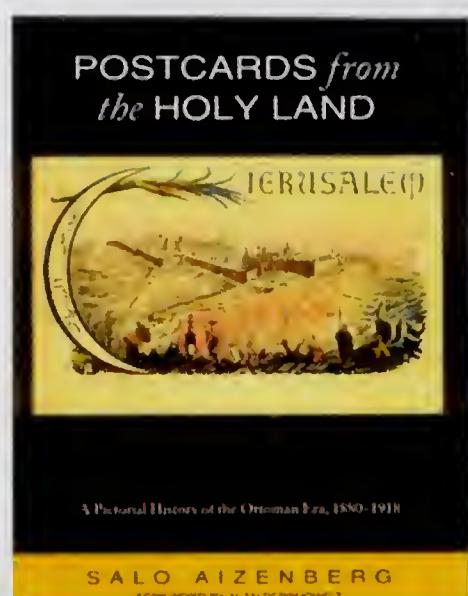
*The gold wedding ring from the Erfurt Treasure Horde. The building on the ring closely resembles the tower on the Gros Tournois coins found in the Erfurt hoard.*

of a banking, money-lending individual that proved how wealthy Erfurt was in medieval times? Or was it the property of a rich, persecuted Jew and a memorial to the tragic destruction of Erfurt's Jewish community in 1349?

Disregarding any notion of 'political correctness,' the unique Jewish wedding ring in the hoard and a study of Erfurt's history dispelled any doubts. The find was an unintentional time capsule of the life of a Jewish banker, a wealthy citizen of Erfurt, who probably perished with his whole family and most of the community in the horror of a pogrom and, as such, it memorialized the 14<sup>th</sup> century German Jewish people who paid a terrible price for their religious beliefs. ☐

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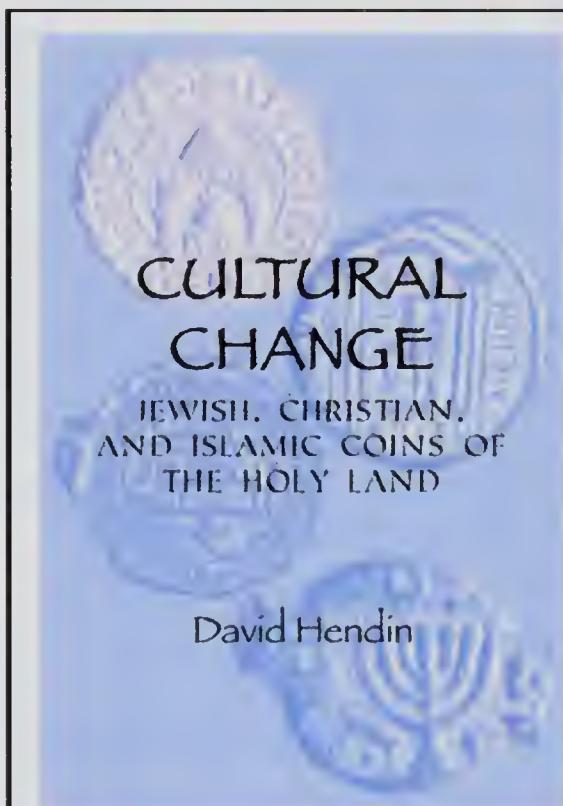
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## CULTURAL CHANGE: JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC COINS OF THE HOLY LAND

American  
Numismatic  
Society

by David Hendin

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*Cultural Change: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Coins of the Holy Land* is a full color catalogue of the coins featured in the ANS' acclaimed temporary exhibit of the same name. All coins are illustrated in full color, with explanatory text, illustrations of related material, maps and family-trees. The volume serves as the ideal introduction to the coinage of the Holy Land, as well as providing a history of the region from the 4th century BC to Crusader times, illustrated by the coinage that was produced there. As such, it contains some of the earliest Jewish coins, as well as the earliest to bear overtly Christian symbolism.

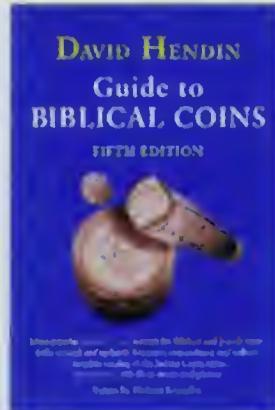
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1912 TO 2012

# HENRIETTA SZOLD:



## HER HADASSAH LEGACY

BY MEL WACKS

**H**enrietta Szold was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1860, a little more than a year after her parents arrived from Hungary. Her father, a prominent rabbi, gave Henrietta the attention and education usually reserved for an eldest son. She learned German, English, French and Hebrew.

Her high school academic record has never been surpassed. In 1899, she took on the lion's share of producing the first American Jewish Year Book, for which Szold was the sole editor from 1904 to 1908.

In 1909, Ms. Szold first visited Palestine. During her tour she was impressed both by the beauty of the land and the misery and disease among the people. And so, with the support of Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, she formed Hadassah in 1912.

Within a year, the fledgling organization had two American nurses in Jerusalem. Today, Hadassah's great hospitals in Jerusalem are



*Henrietta Szold medal by Gerta Ries Wiener, issued by the Jewish-American Hall of Fame in 1976, portrays her early career as a writer and editor, and later as head of Youth Aliyah.*

world famous, treating more than 25,000 patients and handling more than 1.5 million medical tests annually ... Jews and Arabs alike. The Henrietta Szold-Hadassah School of Nursing has trained some 1,500 nurses, and the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School has graduated more than 1,300 doctors.

On June 19, 1914 Hadassah held the first national convention

*Continued*

# EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS



*Hadassah seal, designed by Victor David Brenner; on small undated medal.*

*Continued*

in Rochester, New York where it officially adopted the name Hadassah and its purpose "...to promote Jewish institutions and enterprises in Palestine and to foster Zionist ideals in America." Hadassah had already chosen a motto, suggested by Israel Friedlander, from Jer. 8:19-23, *Aruchat Bat Ami*, translated as "The Healing of the Daughter of My People," and a seal, designed by Victor Brenner (who had designed the Lincoln Cent 5 years earlier), of myrtle branches around a Jewish star.

In 1933, at the age of 73, Szold embarked on a major new project ... rescuing Jewish children from the oncoming Holocaust. Despite obstacles in dealing with the British Mandate government in Palestine, by 1948 her Youth Aliyah program brought 30,000 children from



*Israel's 1960 (5721) 1-lira Chanukah coin, commemorating the birth of Henrietta Szold features the Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem on the obverse. The reverse portrays a shepherdess holding a newborn lamb, symbolizing the rescue of child survivors of the Holocaust by the Youth Aliyah program.*

troubled Europe to Palestine. Even at the age of 81, Henrietta Szold accepted a new challenge ... planning the Fund for Child and Youth Care.

Today, Hadassah's third of a million members and 1,350 chapters

*Continued*

# HADASSAH BENEFITS COUNTLESS



*Continued*

around the world make it one of the largest philanthropic organizations and a living tribute to the hard work and vision of its founder, Henrietta Szold.

Numismatic commemoratives honoring Henrietta Szold and Hadassah have been issued over the years by Israel.

First was a 1960 (5721) 1 lira Chanuka coin, issued on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Henrietta Szold. The obverse features the Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem; the reverse design includes the name of Henrietta Szold in Hebrew; below is the year of the issue and "Hadassah - Youth Aliyah" in Hebrew. Obverse designs are by Rothschild and Lippman, reverse is by Jacob Zim.

An Israel State Medal was also issued in 1960, commemorating the dedication of the new Hadassah Medical Centre. About a month

*A 1960 State Medal, issued by the Israel Coins and Medals Corporation in bronze, tombac and silver commemorates the dedication of the new Hadassah Medical Center. Above left: the Hadassah logo.*

before the Declaration of Independence on the 13th April, 1948, a convoy making its way to Mount Scopus was attacked as it crossed the Sheik Jerach quarters in East Jerusalem and 78 people in the convoy were brutally murdered.

It became obvious that the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus

*Continued*



*An aerial view of the Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem.*

*Continued*

was not safe and the medical staff decided to abandon it and establish themselves in rented quarters in the western part of the city.

Hadassah immediately mounted a fund raising effort to establish a new medical centre at Ein Kerem. In August 1960, the new, spacious and well equipped medical centre on a hill overlooking Beit Hakerem, was inaugurated in western Jerusalem. The 1960 State medals, designed by Miriam Karoli, were issued by the Israel Coins and Medals Corporation in bronze, tombac and silver.

Another State Medal was issued in 1975, commemorating a new Hadassah hospital building on Mount Scopus. The Hadassah University Hospital on Mount Scopus was dedicated in 1939 and rapidly

acquired a reputation for being the best equipped in the Middle East. With the increasing attacks on the Jewish community, intending to frustrate the establishment of a Jewish State, access to Mount Scopus became more and more dangerous.

On May 8, 1948, it became necessary to evacuate the last of the medical staff from Mount Scopus. Soldiers of "Haganah" were left behind to maintain Jewish sovereignty and to guard the installation. Jerusalem was reunited on June 8, 1967, after the Six Day War. Hadassah leaders raised their ensign on Mount Scopus and declared: "This is the banner of a war against ignorance, disease - the banner of Peace. On raising it we hereby vow - this hospital shall come back to life again."

*Continued*

# HADASSAH'S MEDICAL CENTER



*The sculpture "Tree of Life" by Jacques Lipshitz unveiled in 1978 is featured on a 1978 Israel state medal presented by the City of Jerusalem to all participants in the Hadassah National Convention held that year.*

*Continued*

The 1975 medal's obverse features the new hospital building on Mount Scopus. In the center above the entrance, the three domes memorialize the old building. The inscription reads: "Greater the latter glory than the former" (*Hagai 2:9*) in Hebrew and English. Medals were issued in bronze and silver. Designed by the Shamir Brothers.

In 1978, a 1 9/16" Israel State Medal was presented by the City of Jerusalem to all participants of the Hadassah Convention held in Israel's capitol city. The design fea-



*A 1975 State medal features the new hospital building on Mt. Scopus. In the center above the entrance, the three domes memorialize the old building. The inscription reads "Greater the latter glory than the former" (*Hagai 2:9*) in Hebrew and English. Medals were issued in bronze and silver. Designed by the Shamir brothers.*

*tures the sculpture "Tree of Life" by Jacques Lipshitz which was erected on Mt. Scopus in the same year.*

*Lipchitz's last work, *The Tree of Life*, a six-meter-high bronze, was unveiled posthumously on Sept. 21,*

*Continued*

# MANY MEDALS ISSUED IN HONOR



The 1978 Hadassah State medal features the “Tree of Life” - the last sculpture of Jacques Lipchitz, which the artist said represented “the dynamics of our religion.”

*Continued*

1978, outside the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus.

The sculpture consists of the interwoven formalized expressionist figures of Noah, Abraham and Isaac at the *Akedah* (*Genesis 22:1-19*), with the angel restraining the patriarch Moses in front of the Burning Bush, and rising from it a phoenix supporting the Two Tablets.

Lipchitz referred to it as “the dynamics of our religion.” Israel State Medals marked the jubilee (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of Youth Aliyah in 1983/4. Youth Aliyah activities began in 1933 in Germany, when Recha Freier devoted herself to saving Jewish children from the hands of the Nazis.

In 1934, the first group of children was welcomed to Israel by Henrietta Szold and sent to Kibbutz Ein Harod. Since then, more than

*Continued*



*Images courtesy ICMC*

*The 50th anniversary medal of 1983/4 marks the jubilee of Aliyah activities that first began in Germany in 1933 and was devoted to saving children from the Nazis.*

# ANNIVERSARY MEDALS POPULAR

*Continued*

200,000 children from all over the world have received their education in Youth Aliyah institutions. Today, 18,000 children study in kibbutzim, youth villages, boarding schools and centers for youth - among these, some 2,000 new immigrants, and youngsters are spending a year of their high school studies in Israel.

The Diamond Jubilee of Hadassah, in 1987, inspired yet another Israel State Medal.

According to [www.israelmint.com](http://www.israelmint.com), "For 75 years, Hadassah The Women's Zionist Organization of America, has brought to Israel the first and best in modern medicine, youth rescue, career education and land development. These have been invaluable to Israel's rebirth and survival."

As far as the author knows, no numismatic items have been issued by Israel to commemorate Hadassah's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, celebrated by a convention in Jerusalem. (If anyone knows of a Hadassah centennial medal please let me know.)

However Israel did issue stamps in honor of the occasion.

Hadassah members and the general public in Israel were invited to submit design ideas. The winning design came from Israeli artist Zvika Roitman, who has created several previous Israeli stamps.



*Images courtesy ICMC*

*The 75th anniversary medal of Hadassah features the Hadassah emblem and the organization's official motto: "the healing of the daughter of thy people" (Jeremiah 8:22) in Hebrew and English. Medal designed by Ruben Nutels.*

The new stamp features a Magen David-shaped complex of religious, cultural, and medical images — all elements related to Hadassah's support of medicine, education, and Zionism. "The challenge was putting this together in a stamp that was going to be small," said Roitman.

*Continued*

# SZOLD DEFINED PHILANTHROPY



Above: The 5 lirot bank note Israel issued on March 11, 1976, bears the date 1973 and a dignified portrait of Henrietta Szold. The note ceased to be legal tender on March 31, 1984. Designed by Paul Kor and printed by Johan Enschedé en Zonen in Haarlem, Netherlands. At right, noted Israeli designer Zvika Roitman designed the stamp commemorating Hadassah's 100th anniversary.



*Continued*

Below the stamp itself is a black-and-white tab — a photo of the 1918 American Zionist Medical Unit that Hadassah dispatched to Eretz Israel.

There are undoubtedly great numbers of Hadassah tsatskes produced over the last 100 years, and I will present two examples that I find particularly interesting.

*Continued*

# HADASSAH MEMORABILIA



*Continued*

The first appeared in a Goldberg auction, described as “Filigreed silver pin has a design made up of a large Star of David with Hebrew inscription ‘For your continued support of Hadassah,’ surrounded by Star of David shaped flowers, and the addition of ‘VVV’ below.”

The medal looks like it may have been produced in the 1940s. I would love to know if any reader knows more about this piece, in particular what “VVV” signifies.

In 1972, a privately issued looped medal was produced with “Hadassah” in Hebrew plus the English inscription “50 YEARS OF PROGRESS.” It appeared in an Internet auction. If anyone knows anything about this piece please let me know. ☩



*Top: Not much is known about a silver pin sold at a Goldberg's auction honoring “for your continued support of Hadassah” perhaps in the 1940s. The three “V” medal bar remains enigmatic. Image courtesy Goldberg's Coins & Auctions.*  
*Above: A 1972 privately issued medal carries the English inscription “50 Years of Progress” and more information is needed.*

# Picasso

## WAS HE JEWISH?

BY MEL WACKS



Jewish song writers Harold Arlen and E.Y. "Yip" Harburg wrote "Lydia the Tattooed Lady," sung by Groucho Marx in the 1939 movie "At the Circus." The lyrics include:

*Come along and see Buff'lo Bill with his lasso.*

*Just a little classic by Mendel Picasso.*

*Here is Captain Spaulding exploring the Amazon.*

*Here's Godiva but with her pajamas on.*

**Picasso** is, of course, the great artist. But why is he called *Mendel Picasso* in the song? — Mendel being an obvious Jewish name. It probably was just put in to sound funny. And there certainly was not room for Picasso's real full name - Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Clito Ruiz y Picasso.

However, there may be a grain of truth regarding Picasso's possible Jewishness. In John Richardson's monumental biography of the artist, he writes about Picasso's grandfather: "Next to nothing is known about this bizarre gentleman ...



*Groucho Marx is portrayed on an extraordinary Hobo" nickel, hand-carved from an authentic Buffalo Nickel by Andy Gonzales.*

*Continued*

# PICASSO NUMISMATIC COMMEMORATIVES

*Continued*

beyond the fact that he married a plump young woman from the province of Málaga, Inés López Robles, rumored to be a Marrano.” (During the Spanish Inquisition, a Jew who outwardly converted to Christianity but who continued to observe Judaism secretly, was called a Marrano.)

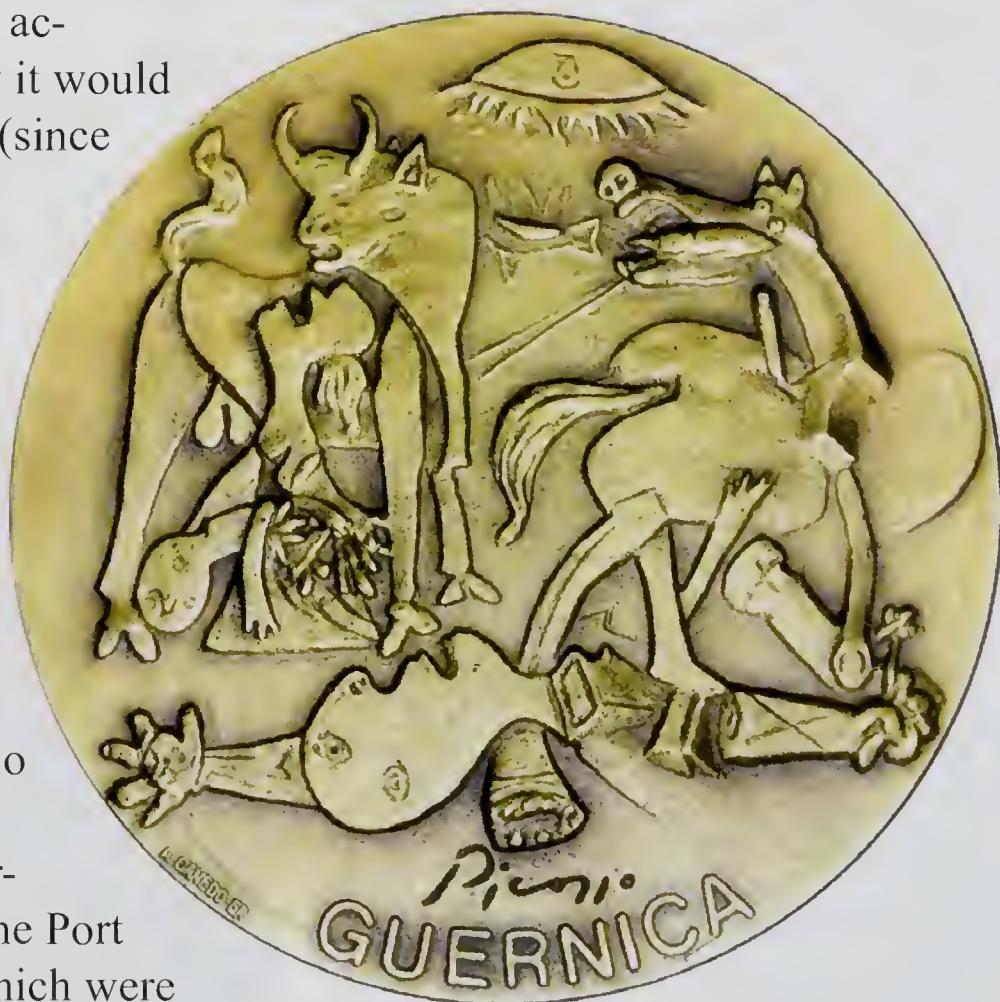
Since Inés was Picasso’s mother’s mother, according to Jewish law it would make Picasso Jewish (since Jewishness is passed down from mother to child).

There is no doubt that Robles is a Marrano-Jewish surname. Edgar Samuel has written that “At the time England went to war with Spain in 1655, Antonio Rodrigues Robles (c. 1620 to 1688) had cargoes in two ships in the Port of London, both of which were seized.

He petitioned for their release on the grounds that he was not a Spaniard but a Portuguese Jew, and that since England was not at war with Portugal he was not an enemy



*The 2010 France 100 euro gold coin, above, and below, the Picasso Guernica bronze medal by Portugal’s A. Ribiero depicting one of Picasso’s most famous paintings.*



alien,” according to the Jewish Historical Society of England web site at <http://www.jhse.org>.

So was Groucho singing the truth? He said it best: “Quote me as saying I was mis-quoted.” ☐

# ESPERANTO:

## NEW LANGUAGE CHALLENGES FASCISM IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

BY PETER HORVITZ



*An Esperanto poster from the Spanish Civil War translates as “What are you doing to stop this? Esperantists of the world, pit your strength against international Fascism.”*

**O**n May 21, 1940, a mild-looking, slightly pudgy, 55-year-old bald man with glasses was placed against a wall in the Cementerio de la Almudena, Madrid's principal cemetery.

A squad of soldiers marched up to face him. They raised their rifles and fired a volley.

The executed “criminal” was Cayetano Redondo Acena and his capital offenses, according to the Franco government, included acting as the duly elected mayor of

Madrid under the Second Republic, helping in the city's defense against rebel forces, and advocating the use of the new language Esperanto.

The Franco government would continue its persecution of Esperantists for many years to come.

But eventually it did abandon this policy and, in 1968, Francisco Franco himself accepted the title of honorary patron of the Madrid World Esperanto Congress. But in

*Continued*

# ESPERANTO COINS STRUCK IN 1912



*Images courtesy the author*

*Pattern coins struck in 1912 for Esperanto carried the 1 spesmilo and the 2 spesmiloj denominations. The coins were struck in silver.*

*Continued*

the early years following the close of the Spanish Civil War, the artificial language was still associated with the Republican cause, with Catalan and Basque separatism, and with a liberal agenda.

Esperanto was the brainchild of Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof (1859 to 1917), a Jew born in Bialystok, a city then in the Russian empire, now in Poland. He created the artificial language in 1887.

Zamenhof first published his work under the pen name of Dr. Esperanto, or Dr. Hope. The pseudonym caught on as the name for the language itself. Esperanto is considerably easier to learn than other languages, since its design is far simpler and more regular.

Esperanto has only 16 rules of grammar, none of which have exceptions. Zamenhof was an

amateur linguist, but one with numerous scholarly achievements behind him, including the first grammar ever written for the Yiddish language.

It was not just as an intellectual experiment that Zamenhof created Esperanto. His purposes were to reverse the tragedy of the Tower of Babel and to bring all people together through their understanding of a common language that all people could learn with the minimum of effort.

The organization that followed on his creation included ideas for a universal government that would prevent war as well as a universal currency.

As a result of this idea, in 1912 silver pattern coins were struck in the denominations of one spesmilo and two spesmiloj. The obverse

*Continued*

# REPUBLICANS RE-STAMPED GOV'T COINS



*Images courtesy the author*

*Two counterstamped coins of the Spanish Civil War. The UHP coin on the left is typical, with crude work and using separate dies for each letter. These dies were probably just pieces of printer's type. The piece on the right is carefully produced, using only one die especially prepared for counterstamping existing coinage.*

*Continued*

of these coins bear a portrait facing left of Dr. Zamenhof.

Esperanto was advocated in the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War as a means of creating solidarity among the various international forces, including English, American, Polish, Russian, and French. It was also seen as a way of finding common ground for communication among the various ethnic groups of Spain itself, without the bitterness that arose with the domination of Spanish.

This was particularly important for the minority Catalan and Basque populations.

Of the approximately 35,000 men and women from 52 countries from around the world who

volunteered to defend the Spanish republic, more than one quarter were Jewish. Many of these saw Spain as the first front line to battle the forces of Nazism and Fascism and they did not wish to miss the opportunity.

For these Jewish volunteers, Esperanto would be particularly attractive, both because of its Jewish origin through Zamenhof and its ability to allow easy, mutual communications.

From 1936 to 1939 a weekly information bulletin of the anarchist organization CNT/FAI was published in Esperanto with the cooperation of the Iberian League of Esperantist Anarchists.

The anarchist organization also

*Continued*

# ‘ESPERANTISTS OF THE WORLD: UNITE!’

*Continued*

produced regular radio broadcasts in Esperanto.

Among the numerous colorful posters that were mounted on walls throughout Republican territory were posters with Esperanto texts. For instance, there was a poster showing the Iberian Peninsula being attacked by two bloody fists bearing knives, one, with a swastika on the sleeve, emanating from Germany, and the other from Italy with fasces on the sleeve.

The Esperanto text reads “Kion vi feras por eviti tion? Geesperantistoj el la tuta mondo agu energie kontrau la internacia fasismo!”

This translates as “What are you doing to stop this? Esperantists of the world, pit your strength against international Fascism.”

Another use of Esperanto during the Spanish Civil War was for propaganda stamps, seals that could be attached to letters. One of these



*Image courtesy Israel Coins and Medals Corporation*

*Official Israel medals commemorating Dr. Eliezer Ludwig Zamenhof are still available in bronze, silver and gold--priced at \$85, \$154 and \$1,335 respectively—at [www.israelmint.com/en](http://www.israelmint.com/en). Designs by Ruben Nutels (obverse) and Aharon Shevo (reverse).*

issued during the conflict shows various races of the world under the words “Esperanto Lingvo Internacia” or Esperanto the International Language. Around this appears the message to learn Esperanto in various tongues.

During the Spanish Civil War there was a severe shortage of small change. This led to the issue of special coinages by both the Republican government and the Nationalist forces. There were also coins struck by local governments all over Spain.

*Continued*

# ‘ESPERANTO SI’ A RALLYING CRY

*Continued*

However, these measures did not solve the problem and the majority of coins circulating remained old copper coins of the Provisional Government of 1868-1870 and King Alphonso XII.

Many of these old coppers were counterstamped with propaganda messages.

On the Republican side most of these consisted of the initials of various political organizations, socialist, communist, or anarchist.

After these, the most common counterstamped coins are those with the letters UHP, standing for unios hermanos proletarios or “unite proletarian brothers.”

There is a counterstamped 10 centimos coin of the Provisional Government, that has been



*Image courtesy the author*

*A 10 centimos Spanish copper counterstamped with “Esperanto Si” in an effort to both spread the word of the new language and to create a universal currency. This example is relatively sophisticated in its counterstamping, and also is one of the more rare examples of this type.*

stamped with the words ESPERANTO SI on the reverse, over the lion design.

The counterstamp is beautifully executed, unlike the crude work typical of many Civil War counterstamps.

It is likely that this counterstamp was issued by the same Esperantist group that sponsored the newsletter and the radio broadcasts. This piece is very rarely seen. □

# PROFILE: MILT FISHGOLD AINA'S GENTLE GIANT

Milton M. Fishgold was born in New York City's lower East Side, growing up during the Depression. At the time of Milt's writing his autobiography in 1982, he was 71 years old. Even though both of Milt's parents were Russian immigrants, his parents actually met and married here in America in 1909.

To be closer to other members of the family, Milt's parents moved the entire family to Sioux City, Iowa in 1917. Growing up in the mid-West during these years was not an easy thing for a young man and Milt held a variety of jobs while attending school: grocery store clerk; selling newspapers; shining shoes; and doing yard work.

It was while being a newspaper boy that Milt caught the coin collecting bug from picking out Indian Head pennies in the change he collected, along with some seated dimes, quarters and half dollars.

After saving up a whopping \$12.00 to purchase a 1795 U.S. silver dollar, the one with flowing hair, this special coin became his "pride and joy coin."

In 1933 Milt married his high



*Milton M. Fishgold*

school sweetheart Rhoda, and they then moved to Huron, South Dakota where their son Bernie was born. Milt soon became assistant store manager of 29 General Merchandise Stores. Because the store where Milt worked was right across the street from the Humphrey Drug Store, there was a time when

Hubert Humphrey worked as a box boy for Milt and of course, later on, through Mr. Humphrey's efforts, President Roosevelt with his entire entourage came to town to assure the local farmers that "better times were coming."

Milt worked in South Dakota and Iowa in several different department stores including the Broadway and May Company.

The family finally moved to Santa Monica, Cal., after Bernie had volunteered in the Navy and married. After a number of years in Santa Monica, Milt and Rhoda moved to the San Fernando Valley where Milt had become manager of the Broadway Department Store in Panorama City.

In Milt's words, through all those years, he continued going

*Continued*

# A LEADER IN NUMISMATICS OF ISRAEL

*Continued*

through change hoping to come across an unusual or rare find.

It was after their move to California where Milt met several coin collectors who not only mentored him but also invited him to visit their coin clubs, collectors including Sally Marx, Peggy Borgolte, Ben and Clare Abelson, Jerry Yahalom, Cliff Roth, and Jean and Maurice Gould. After joining the INS of Los Angeles, Milt's passion for numismatics of Israel exploded. He soon became a board member, president, or speaker at several of the Southern California clubs, in addition to the larger organizations such as N.A.S.C., C.O.I.N., S.I.N. and A.I.N.A. At the height of AINA's INS clubs, Milt was elected to the AINA Board of Directors as one of the West Coast Regional Directors, where he held this position for a number of years.

Following their first and only trip to Israel in 1977 on one of AINA's tours to Israel, Milt's numismatic interests expanded to the Middle East, Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia.

In addition to collecting coins and currency, other collecting interests of Milt's were books, many being signed by the authors, and archeological artifacts.

Among Milt's prized possessions were photographs of himself with a number of notable numismatists

and most were connected to AINA in some way: Morris Bram, Yitzhak Avni, Teddy Kolleck, Eliezer Shiloni, Mary Brooks, Eva Adams, Nahum Hacohen, Arie Kindler, Dr. Aubrey Joffee, Raffi Aldor, Arnold Kagan and Ephram Levy, just to mention a few.

Other than the AINA Tour to Israel in 1977, Milt's most prized moments were when he was able to spend quality time with Rhoda, Bernie and their three grandchildren, Steven, Alan and Ronnie.

*Written by Donna J. Sims, NLG*

## *(PostScript)*

Milt was a close numismatic friend of mine for a number of years and while writing this story, many fond memories came flooding through my mind. Both Milt and I were stunned to learn we both had lived not only in Sioux City, Iowa, but were from the same neighborhood.

And I could picture the trip to Israel in 1977 because I happened to have been on that same trip, along with my son Michael.

I wish I could have found a certain picture taken of the four of us taking a break, sitting under some palm trees on the tip of the Sinai in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. Thanks for the memories Milt.

Milt wrote his autobiography on original AINA letterhead stationery dated June 1, 1982. □

*Witold Pilecki: 1901-1948*

# Mission



# Impossible

*Founder of concentration camp resistance willingly enters Auschwitz; documents atrocities, escapes; post-war, Communists execute him*

BY ANDREW PERALA

**B**ravery beyond the call of duty is honored in many militaries, often for the risking of one's life in a single act or single battle.

Such are the bonds of brothers in arms that no force can tear asunder their commitment to fight, even at the risk of sudden and violent death.

On Sept. 19, 1940, Polish army officer and patriot Witold Pilecki allowed himself to be swept off the grid in Warsaw's Second Street roundup. Pilecki

knew he would be sentenced to Auschwitz.

But he didn't know what to expect. And he didn't give the Nazis his real name. Instead, he identified himself as Tomasz Serafinski.

At the time, the Polish underground knew little about the "prisoner of war" camp.

Pilecki, the legend goes, wanted to find out. There is truth behind the legend. Wilecki



*Poland's 2010 100-złotich coin honors Witold Pilecki, the Polish patriot who was willing to sacrifice all to uncover the reality hidden behind the walls of Auschwitz. Above, the coin's obverse.*

*Opposite page, the coin's reverse with its portrait of Wilecki.*

# PILECKI SURVIVES SUICIDE MISSION

*Continued*

organized an internal resistance group inside Auschwitz.

And the truth got out. Auschwitz was no Geneva-convention POW camp - it was a concentration camp designed to wipe out the Jews and other “undesirables” in a holocaust of mass murder.

Through messages carried by escapees and the rare released prisoner, Pilecki gave the world one of the first accounts of the Holocaust.

He documented the daily regimens, and cold calculations behind the brutal work schedule that prisoners who survived immediate death had to face every moment of their Auschwitz lives.

Stripped, beaten and tattooed on his first day (number 4859), Pilecki soon learned that prisoners at Auschwitz were fed just enough rations and worked just short of exhaustion - a killing calculus designed to keep them alive for just six weeks. Then, they were tossed aside and burned, like used pieces of paper.

Pilecki survived longer, though, and founded a resistance group inside Auschwitz. His group ferreted

out messages about the tortures, the killings, the executions of captured escapees and the mass murder of Jews inside Auschwitz.

By 1942, Pilecki’s group had learned the details and procedures of the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

They began planning several ways to liberate the camp.

But by 1943, when it became clear that no help would be offered by the Allies, Pilecki and several others began planning their escape.

Both he and his superiors outside realized he couldn’t physically tolerate the conditions much longer.

By that time, Pilecki had earned, and sometimes fought, his way up the work ladder, landing a coveted spot in a bakery located outside the walls of Auschwitz.

Even though he and his compatriot workers were guarded by SS soldiers, Pilecki and several other compatriots bided their time, planned carefully, waited some more, then escaped through a weakly locked back door.

They heard bullets shoot past them as they ran away. But they

*Continued*



# RABBI OF PILECKI: ‘INEXPLICABLE GOODNESS’ IN TIME OF ‘INEXPLICABLE EVIL’



Poland’s 2010 2-złotich coin honors those who suffered and died and those who somehow managed to survive the ultimate horrors Witold Pilecki helped unveil inside Auschwitz.

*Continued*

made it, all of them, according to first-hand accounts.

After his escape, Pilecki continued to fight in the Polish underground back in Poland.

In 1944, Pilecki was captured again in Warsaw, this time while actively fighting in the ghetto uprising of that year. This time, he was sentenced to spend the rest of World War II in a prisoner-of-war camp.

At war’s end, according to the *Jewish Virtual Library*, in July 1945 Pilecki joined other Polish patriots in Italy. He agreed to return to Poland to “gather intelligence” on the Soviet takeover of his country.

There his mission impossible ended. Captured by the Communist

regime, Pilecki was executed on May 25, 1948, after receiving three life sentences for his “crimes.”

Little was known of Pilecki’s heroic actions until after the fall of Eastern bloc Communism in 1989.

Pilecki, a Roman Catholic, is regarded highly by Polish people of many faiths.

According to the *Jewish Virtual Library*, Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, said of Pilecki:

“[He was] an example of inexplicable goodness at a time of inexplicable evil. There is ever-growing awareness of Poles helping Jews in the Holocaust, and how they paid with their lives, like Pilecki. We must honor these examples and follow them today where there are horrors again.” □

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High relief silver medal (45 grams - 40mm) commemorates 50th anniversary of Danish Jewish community escape from the clutches of Germans. Created by Danish artist, engraver and medalist Bent Jensen, this piece features a reverse of Holger Danske, a national hero, and an obverse with Jews between the maps of Denmark and Sweden.

## Herzl Passport



1850 Franz Joseph I official passport for Israel Herzl (24x40 cm). Sealed with signed revenue stamp, dated 1850. In 1815, Austria emerged from Napoleonic Wars as a powerhouse; the Hapsburgs returned to rule. This single-page passport (Reise-Pass) bears all information about Israel Herzl, including name, character, birthplace, birth year, religion, stature, hair color etc. All signed by the Gov. & General Commander of the Serbian region of Timis, western Romania and Banate, Southern Hungary. Finely printed in large format (about 9x16 inches) in blue with a decorative border. Document dated 1850, sealed with signed revenue stamp. Theodore (Tivadar/Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl was born in Pest (the other side of Buda - Hungary), his family had come from Zemun (present day Serbia, by Belgrade on the Danube). But Herzl was a common name, so it could be a relative or not.

## Houghton

Works of Art from Houghton Jews - Hardcover Christie's London, 8 December 1994. Edition provides extensive information about Philip & Sybil Sassoon and their magnificent holdings. 361pp; near perfect condition; no folds, notations or markings. Unopened.

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## INTERVIEW:

# Meir Eshel

*Artist designs Israel's banknotes, coins, medals and more*

BY MEL WACKS

**Q:** I searched on your name on the Israel Coins & Medals Corporation's web site [www.israelmint.com](http://www.israelmint.com) and was amazed at the number of coins, medals and paper money you have created. Do you know the number?

**MEIR ESHEL:** I don't usually look back and count my art works. I prefer to move forward and concentrate on my new challenges.



**Q -** What was the first coin or medal that you designed for Israel? Did it take many tries before you came up with the design that was accepted? About how many weeks does it take you to produce a final design?

**Meir:** The first coin I designed for the Bank of Israel was the "Hanukka Lamp from Tunisia" Coin, in 1988/5749. Creating a design involves study and analysis of the theme, putting together idea and concept to form a clear, original artistic expression, most appropriate for the respective media. Being a pedantic artist, I



*Top: Meir Eshel created the lion design for Israel's "Jerusalem of Gold" bullion coins. Above: The obverse of Israel's 2012 Independence Day 2-New-Sheqalim coin designed by Eshel.*

*Continued*

# ESHEL'S WORK ON POLYMER NOTE

*Continued*

usually prepare several drafts, presenting the subject from different angles and aspects. I tend to put my ideas together quickly. The final design can take a few weeks to compose and is subject to the comments or approval of whoever has commissioned the design – the Bank of Israel or Israel Coins and Medals Corp., for example.

**Q** - I believe that you create the design and that someone else sculpts it—do you work with the sculptor in developing the final sculpted model?

**Meir:** Cooperation between the designer and engraver is very important. I have known the person who engravings most of the Coins of Israel, for many years, and this helps a lot in his accurate sculpture of the design. Even when the sculpt is not produced in Israel, the designer should be able to cooperate well with the engraver and give him clear instructions, illustrated by diagrams and computerized simulations.

**Q** - Your coin/medal subjects include portraits, military, nature, biblical, archaeology, etc. Do you enjoy any of these themes best? Do you have any particular coins



*Israel's new 20 Sheqalim polymer bank note co-designed by Meir Eshel.*

or medals that are your favorites?

**Meir:** I believe that all the medals, coins, banknotes and stamps I have designed serve as Ambassadors of the State of Israel. They are artistic expressions of the Israeli Society in its entirety and reflect the principal values of the people of Israel, in all domains, from the dawn of history until the present.

I have no preference for any

*Continued*

# ARTIST'S VISION RANGES FAR, WIDE

*A limited edition of 180 Mikash Chanukah lamps were produced by Israel Coins and Medals Corporation. The lamp was designed by artist Meir Eshel and produced by Hadad Brothers Silversmiths. The design of this lamp was inspired by ancient Chanuka lamps, among them the stone Menorah that was found in the ancient synagogue in Tiberias. The top half of the back is embossed with the design of an ancient coin from the time of Bar Kochba.*



*Continued*

specific subject. Every theme entralls me and I enjoy working on all my designs. Asking me which theme I like best is like asking a mother which of her children she likes best.

**Q** - Do you have a subject that you would like to commemorate on a coin or medal that you haven't been asked to do yet?

**Meir:** I would like the opportunity to design a medal to take us into an age of love and respect between all peoples of the world.

**Q** - I see you worked together with Naomi Eshel to design Israel paper money; have you worked



*Meir Eshel*

together on other numismatic projects? How are you related to Naomi?

**Meir:** Naomi is my ex-wife. We designed banknotes as well as some medals, coins and stamps, together, until 1998. □

# Helena

## *The first Christian Pilgrim*

BY DAVID HENDIN

**O**n a recent visit to Rome, we took an hour to seek out the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.

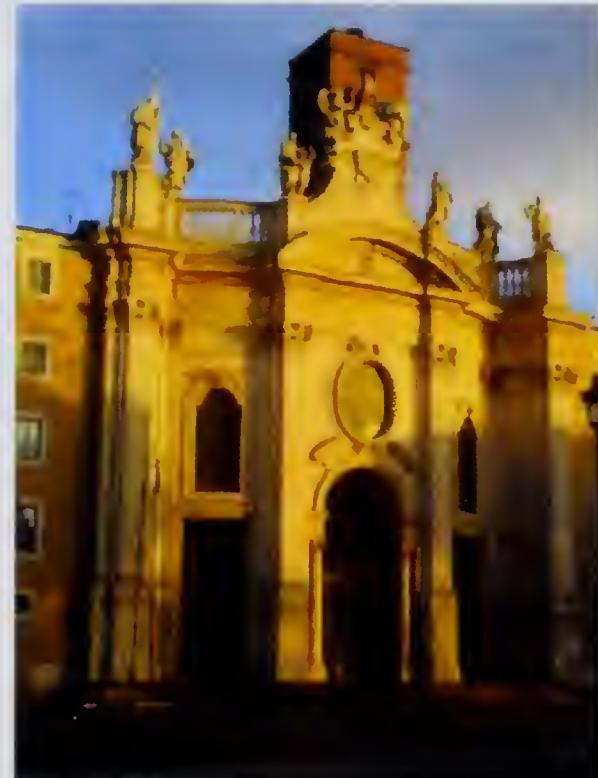
My *American Express Guide to Rome* (out of print, but still handy) says it was “One of the seven pilgrim churches of Rome, it is said to have been built to house the precious relics of the True Cross brought to Rome from Jerusalem by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine.”

The *Eyewitness Travel Guide* adds that “St. Helena founded this church ... on the grounds of her private palace. Although the church stood at the edge of the city, the relics of the Crucifixion that St. Helena had brought back from Jerusalem made it a center of pilgrimage.

“Most important were the pieces of Christ’s Cross (“croce” means “cross”) and part of Pontius Pilate’s inscription in Latin, Hebrew and Greek: ‘Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.’”

Constantine and Helena are worshipped as saints of the Orthodox Church.

When we entered the church, only



*Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*

a few days after Easter, we seemed to be the only visitors. We walked up to the altar and around the chapel. We did not see any relics, so we made our way into the smaller side rooms.

We found the relics in a small room behind the main altar. Here we saw St. Helena’s relics: three pieces of wood set in a larger cross, and they are said to be actual pieces of the True Cross.

Two thorns, said to be from Jesus’ crown of thorns are mounted and stand alongside it, as does a piece of a bronze nail, said to be from the crucifixion itself.

And finally, we saw the piece of wood that is said to be from the sign Pontius Pilate was said to have erected over Jesus while he was crucified.

While not a single numismatic memento of Helena’s important pilgrimage to the Holy Land was struck, her coins do offer us a portrait of this important woman of antiquity.

The coin shown on the next page was

*Continued*

# COINS GIVE GLIMPSE OF HELENA

*Continued*

struck as a commemorative shortly after her death. Whether or not they are authentic relics, I cannot say. But seeing them was a most interesting experience.

It led me to recall the importance of Helena, later revered as St. Helena, to the ancient land of Israel.

Hers is a real “rags to riches” story. We believe Helena was born in about 249 C.E. in the town of Drepanum in Bythnia, which Constantine later renamed Helenopolis.

St. Ambrose referred to her as an inn-keeper, others say she was a simple bar maid in her father’s tavern.

Eventually she attracted the attention of a Roman soldier, Constantius Chlorus and she became either his longtime mistress, or his wife.

In either case there is no doubt that together they bore a son, Constantine.

In 292, when Constantius became Caesar of Spain, Gaul and Britain, he dumped Helena and married Theodora, the daughter of Maximian, his patron.

Meanwhile, Helena’s son Constantine became a soldier, and spent a lot of time at Diocletian’s court.

When Constantine persuaded the Roman legions in Britain to proclaim him Caesar in 306, he immediately called for his mother and installed her in his court with the appropriate honors befitting the mother of the Emperor.

In 312, the most significant event of Constantine’s reign occurred.

While preparing for a battle with the army of his rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in Rome, he saw a cross in the sky with the inscription IN HOC



*Images courtesy David Hendin*

*Byzantine AE4 coin showing the portrait of Helena. Photographs © David Hendin.*

## SIGNO VINCES.

He immediately ordered his troops to paint the monogram of Jesus, the labarum, on their shields and this extra strength enabled their victory and gave Constantine control of the West as well as the East, whereupon Constantine vowed to make the Roman Empire a Christian nation.

In 324 CE. Constantine named Helena as “Augusta,” a title that was established by Augustus for Livia, but certainly not granted every empress, much less every royal mother.

In 325, the Council of Nicea met and Constantine declared Christianity to be the nation’s official religion.

Incidentally, it is not clear whether Constantine himself actually ever became a Christian. His mother, Helena, was not only converted but was so excited by her spiritual experience that it enticed her to make a pilgrimage, circa 326 to Judaea, where she could visit all of the sites that were important in the life of Jesus. She was in her late 70s at the time she embarked.

Helena’s pilgrimage was the prototype for the travels of virtually every Christian pilgrim to the Holy Land for some

*Continued*

# HELENA SET PILGRIMAGE STANDARD

*Continued*

1,700 years, right up to today.

Until Helena's visit, nobody outside of the Christians in the holy land itself had paid much attention to the sites in Judea. This was a time, by the way, when the Jews who lived here maintained important academies at Tiberius, Sepphoris, and Lydda (Lod). The Jews were in the final stages of developing the Talmud itself.

When I was the chief numismatist with the Joint Sepphoris Expedition in 1985 and 1986, led by Duke's Eric and Carol Meyers and Hebrew University's Ehud Netzer, we discovered some remarkable mosaic floors - many more were subsequently discovered - which indicated the city was extremely wealthy when Helena arrived.

In fact, we dated some of these mosaics by small groups of Constantinian coins lying on top of and just under them.

While there is no doubt that the local traditions held some, or perhaps many of the sites Helena visited as holy shrines, it did not hurt that the mother of the Emperor of Christian Rome further declared the sites to be true.

And indeed, Helena was said to have:

\* Proclaimed the actual path Jesus took on his way to the cross, the Via Dolorosa, and declared the precise spots of all 14 Stations of the Cross;

\* Found at least several pieces of the true cross itself;

\* Identified the spot near the Sea of Galilee where the miracle of fish and loaves occurred;

\* Confirmed the place where Jesus stood when he gave his Sermon on the Mount;

\* Marked the place of the Annunciation, where Mary learned that she would give birth to Jesus;

\* And she also identified places where Joseph's carpentry shop stood, where Jesus was born, the field in which the shepherds saw the Bethlehem Star, and the inn of the Good Samaritan.

The story of Helena's pilgrimage is certainly not fantasy. In his *Life of Constantine* (c. 340 C.E.), Eusebius wrote (only about 10 years after her death) that Helena lavished good deeds on the Holy Land, and "Although well advanced in years, she came, fired by youthful fervor, in order to know this land" and she "explored it with remarkable discernment ... And by her endless admiration for the footsteps of the Savior ... she granted those who came after her the fruits of her piety.

Afterward she built two houses of prayer to the God she revered, one in the Grotto of the Nativity (this is the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem) and the other on the Mount of the Ascension (this is the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives)."

Helena also is said to have identified the spot where Jesus was crucified and buried, and ordered the first Church of the Holy Sepulcher to be built there.

It is a matter of some interest that while Helena's important pilgrimage is well documented, not a single numismatic memento of these events was issued.

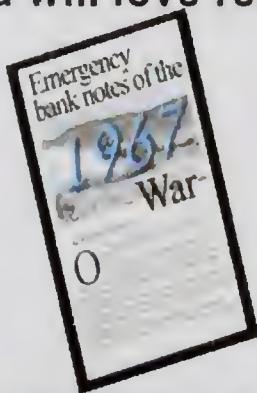
So the coins of Helena can only offer us a glimpse of the appearance of this important woman of antiquity. ☐

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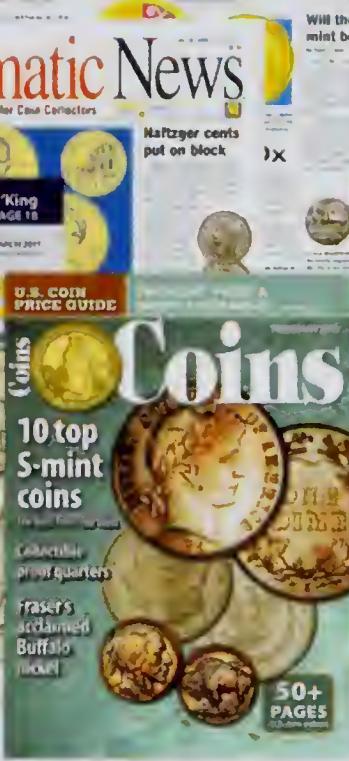
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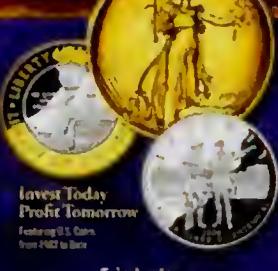
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